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BOOKS ARTS MANNERS

Britain's Master Spy

ANTHONY LEJEUNE

Philby, The Spy Who Betrayed a Generation
By Bruce Page, Phillip Knightley, and David Leitch *Doubleday, $5.95*

The Third Man
By E. H. Cookridge *Putnam, $5.95*

Kim Philby: The Spy I Married
By Eleanor Philby *Ballantine, 75 cents*

My Silent War
By Kim Philby *Grove, $5.95*

Four books about Kim Philby; the Soviet spy who worked his way into the heart of the British secret service—or, to be more precise, three books about him and one by him—are rather too many to be consumed without indigestion; but there's no denying that collectively they are full of interest, both human and political. At the simplest level, Philby performed a remarkable feat of intellect and self-discipline, keeping the two sides of himself apart for thirty years. Picture him, for example, drafting lectures on the Soviet intelligence services for the benefit of British secret service trainees. "It was frustrating," he says blandly, "to have to eliminate from my drafts all knowledge based on personal experience." A poignant scene indeed.

And to anyone who is at all acquainted with the fairly small circle of upper governmental and professional people in London, a surprising number of whom have at one time or another been connected with secret intelligence work, there is the added fascination of meeting a succession of familiar names, presented in an odd and often unflattering light. Many of these people—clever, responsible people—knew things about Philby which should have made them highly suspicious. But they didn't realize or they didn't care. Can one blame them? It is hard to believe that somebody one has known for a long time might be an active, conscious enemy agent.

For all its brashness and lack of balance, much the best of the four books is the one compiled by three young reporters (Bruce Page, Phillip Knightley and David Leitch) on the *London Sunday Times*. The articles on which the book is based were a brilliant example of the team-journalism which the *Sunday Times* has pioneered. The research must have been extraordinarily difficult, expensive and protracted, but it certainly paid off.

E. H. Cookridge's *The Third Man* is inevitably overshadowed, which is bad luck, because he too must have done a lot of research. Being older, he has the benefit of some personal experience. He was part of the socialist underground in Vienna and met Philby there during the bloody clashes which took place in the early 1930s. About other matters, however, Mr. Cookridge is less accurate. He indulges in some rather wild guesswork, suggesting, for example, on quite insufficient evidence, that Maclean was blackmailed by Burgess, and asserting confidently that Philby's father must have known his son was a spy—which Philby himself categorically denies.

Kim Philby: The Spy I Married by Eleanor Philby, Kim's third wife whom he has now abandoned for Melinda Maclean, takes the story several stages further than the other books, starting with the rain-swept night when Philby vanished from Beirut and describing the uneasy months which she afterwards spent with him in Moscow. She seems to feel very little bitterness; their marriage, she says, was "perfect in every way," though she now realizes that she didn't know her husband at all.

Philby's own book, *My Silent War*, is weirdly two-dimensional. Throughout almost the first half, he describes his career in the British secret service as though that were his only career. Then he starts dropping hints about "my other interests," and casually mentions that he went out of his way to study the list of British agents in the Soviet Union. He never does say much about his real work, which is not surprising, since the book must, of course, have been authorized and vetted by his Soviet masters. There are traces of what one acquaintance calls his "quiet cat-like charm," but it's hard to know which is nastier—the viciousness with which he attacks people in the British and American intelligence and security services (including, for example, J. Edgar Hoover) whom he disliked, or the gentility with which he recalls other colleagues, who were his friends while he was betraying them.

He seems genuinely to resent those who were suspicious of him. Like Burgess and Maclean, he had an anomalous attachment to the institutions, the way of life, he was dedicated to destroy. He was fond of P. G. Wodehouse, and in Moscow constantly wore his old Westminster School scarf, just as Burgess wore an Old Etonian tie. All of them enjoyed good living, and Burgess and Maclean, Mrs. Philby recalls, used to talk pathetically about the marvelous times they would have in Italy and Paris "when the revolution comes."

There are some inconsistencies among the various books. The *Sunday Times* book, for instance, dismisses Burgess as a minor figure, whereas Cookridge—and, by implication, Philby—lay great stress on him. Mr. Cookridge thinks that Philby escaped from Beirut by ship, Mrs. Philby thinks he was picked up by a Soviet plane in Syria, and the *Sunday Times* reporters think he walked across the Turkish frontier into Armenia. They disagree, too, about who first recruited Philby into the Soviet service and about which defector